

## THERE'S NO PARADISE and Other Selected Poems Tanka & Haiku

Life is too real to be believed, yet we must keep dreaming and try to live with a resonance of what we think while we touch various levels of reality—political, social, personal or spiritual— and be ourselves. Genuine poetry happens as an event to be truthful, clear, courageous and honest to oneself; to be open about things one often tries to conceal. Poetry provides an opportunity for expressing one's intimate moments with the same passion as while talking about the interwoven outer realities. My experience convinces me that we are not limited by what we are, but we are limited by what we are not. Poetry becomes a means to overcome this limitation, and thus, allows us not only to know ourselves but also to expand on what we are. We should remain open to healthy revisions that we can make to our way of thinking, and incorporate new perspectives into our outlook. In other words, we should not let our rigidity destroy our potential, but rather we should evince a forward-looking, tolerant, and open mindset if we wish to create future. I hope the poems in the book would help us traverse the boundaries of hesitation to see the joy of fulfilment.



Ram Krishna Singh (b. 1950), an Indian English poet, has been writing for about four decades. Professionally, till recently, Professor of English at IIT-ISM in Dhanbad, India, he has published more than 160 research articles, 175 book reviews and 44 books, including the poetry collections *God Too Awaits Light* (2017) and *Growing Within* (2017).

Ram Krishna Singh

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Cover image: [www.ingimage.com](http://www.ingimage.com)

Publisher:

Éditions Muse

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International Book Market Service Ltd., member of OmniScriptum Publishing Group

17 Meldrum Street, Beau Bassin 71504, Mauritius

Printed at: see last page

**ISBN: 978-620-2-29247-4**

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**and Other Selected Poems  
Tanka and Haiku**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The tanka and haiku *sequences* in their present form appear for the first time, even as certain individual tanka and haiku constituting them may have appeared in print and/or online journals such as *Sarasvati* (Leicestershire), *Cholla Needles* (California), *Still* (London), *The Journal of Indian Writing in English* (Gulbarga, India), *Poetcrit* (Maranda, India), *Haiku Novine* (Yugoslavia/Serbia), *Ko* (Nagoya, Japan), *Lynx*, *Syndic Literary Journal*, and *Beneath the Rainbow*. Acknowledgement is due to their editors.

Further, the editors of the following print and online journals and anthologies also published some of the poems, including haiku and tanka, presented here: *Creative Forum* (New Delhi), *Cyber Literature* (Patna), *Triveni* (Hyderabad), *Indian Book Chronicle* (Jaipur), *Prophetic Voices* (Novato, CA), *Moongate de Homo Sentiens* (New Mexico, USA), *Amber* (Dartmouth, Canada), *La Pierna Tierna* (Philadelphia), *Xizquil*(NM,USA), *Haiku Harvest*(Baltimore), *Cotipora Cultural* (Brazil), Asahi Haikuist Network/*The Asahi Shimbun*(Tokyo), Haiku in English: *The Mainichi*(Tokyo), *23 Samobor Haiku Meeting*(Croatia), *24 Samobor Haiku Meeting* (Croatia), *25 Samobor Haiku Meeting* (Croatia), *World Poetry: 1994* (Seoul), *World Poetry: 1995* (Seoul), *Better Than Starbucks*, *Wales Haiku Journal*, *Wild Plum*, *Life and Legends*, *Scriptic:Magazine of Alternative Art and Literature*, *The Bamboo Hut*, *Failed Haiku*, *Simply Haiku*, *Akita International Haiku Network*, *Protecto*, *Cliterature Journal*, and *Poetry Festival*.



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***For Janhavi & Vaishnavi***  
***my grand daughters***

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## **SWEET SAVORS**

Strayed far from the nest  
I'm fed up living with dust  
for years fleeting shade

bereft  
of melody  
of spirit I sink to  
the hades of utter loss  
I can't

reckon hidden mysteries  
I have lost the sea  
for a mere cupful

void of patience and  
peace now as I touch the breasts  
of the field I crave

for a pure breath  
native to  
my being I search  
sweet savors  
of love

## NIRVANA

Hours of silence  
and a lot of walks:  
no facile words

no touchiness  
no paranoia  
no pilgrimage

but chanting within  
through the declining day  
the inner acoustics

on a hilltop  
no cloudy incantation:  
gasp for nirvana

## BURIAL

I want to burn the fallen leaves  
but fear the flame will hurt the trees

I can't stand the stench rains bring  
the backyard is too big to clean

I can't rescue my habitat  
nor trim the trees for better light

this all reflects the shambles made  
for disco of convenience

why regret burial by  
taunting helplessness now

## NOW

My time is now  
the day of salvation  
where is Father?  
playing patty cake?  
I sit a potted plant  
and wait at the doorstep  
tumbling sun and shade



## CHAIN

I do not write the sun, storm or sea  
but re-create myself and others  
in verses turn time or pluck some stars  
to find my ways through masked trenches  
witness to my sinking into mud  
that curves the memories into bias  
disgrace dust, sky, wind, all relations  
window of emotions I must chain  
to breathe a pure breath without passion  
and discover essence of beauty  
spring a move toward self harmony  
perfection and peace, prelude to nude  
enlightenment to carve life in full

## SONG OF SONGS

I'm true in my element  
begotten of earth  
hungry to mate with sky:

seek me in song of songs  
in kisses that he and she  
rehearse on way to bed

the voluptuous squeezes  
fulfillment of godly  
and bodily promises

## **RAINBOW**

They color their hair  
paint their faces to look younger  
then speak aged lies  
to emulate rainbows but stare  
into the sky to find  
which color follows which  
before melding into one  
they wonder what to do  
with beige and indigo shades  
that stick their vision

## **GOD, SEX AND THE WORLD**

It's part of prayer  
to have the lingam kissed  
or kiss it to feel

the creator's pulse  
for a moment  
thank the body too

that houses the spirit  
we seek in His name  
for relief and salvation

through the cycle  
of day and night  
meeting and departing

learning and unlearning  
each moment synthesizing  
god, sex and the world

## CLOSED EYES

The faces appearing  
and receding in  
the darkness of closed eyes

don't answer why  
they aren't winged souls  
fading in the sun

I emptied before it set  
in the gowns of girls  
stopped from dancing bare foot:

they shake autumn in the rain  
mist blurs the image  
water spills in shady pool

## HOPE OF DIVINITY

The falsity of the sky is more real than the earth's  
lies can't sustain hope of divinity

we have complicated with poesying  
private hells to mitigate flow of time

that couldn't carve heaven: we harbor histories  
of broken promises and fallen gods

lament men and women buried in light  
now soulless, bodiless, traceless we look

upward and whittle continents from clouds  
hanging generations that may never be

## TEMPTATION

Again the stone-cool city  
frightens the oval existence  
downward in black moment  
swamps of labor will vanish  
in fume I see no prayers:  
who can hope to dial new angels  
when most have turned cubist cock  
rivaling small spooks underground  
tempting vulgar feats with awnings?



## DESIGNS

Variously hues  
neo-knights knock voters' doors  
search the holy grail  
howling, trolling, abusing  
baying for blood, lynching, rape

exposing designs  
for new history, geography  
and deity in mosques  
set right blunders they didn't write  
reclaim rights they always had

## LUXURY

The framed-in-glass paper goddess  
watches me pee in the one-room apartment  
*vastu* experts blame for bad luck

they defecate or rape hundreds  
in the open no god sees and none find fault:  
cons love luxury of advice

## ANGELIC MAGIC

Luck awaits me  
if I could buy it from  
her miracles stores

she gives me three dates  
for her call to reach  
the higher cosmic forces

she dreams me stand  
in the middle of a  
tree-lined park

against saffron flowers  
flashes of light focus  
on my serene face

the shower of gold tempts  
a being of light descends  
I'm offered a new life

divine abundance  
defeat of enemies  
and stream of love

if I could pay  
for her rituals of  
angelic magic

## **THERE'S NO PARADISE**

The fog in mirror  
slips by damp towel  
cold sets in slippy hands

rain flows on windows  
black water crawls down  
like diseased reptiles

why scrub the smelly  
underbellies  
there's no paradise

## **LIFE'S STRANGE RELATION**

The mind is put off  
before the act blood lets down:  
it's end before beginning

how can touch be erotic  
with cold copulars  
in drunken gibberish?

they all chant their own  
equations through grooves of night  
trick weeds of ideas

life's strange relation:  
words belong to all  
but deeds to a few

## CREATIVITY

The hole between words is vaginal  
if the mind could penetrate

the seed won't question age  
inside the lines it crackles

with orgasmic pleasure  
meanders through the tunnel

from first breath to oblivion  
stays erect, liberates the text

## NEW DAWN

I love the night with you  
when sleepless we yield  
to passions of the body  
tugging the nagging divine  
in the mind ageing fears melt  
and dry between the sheets  
for a new dawn to set in



## **MOTH**

I gave you my love  
what more do you seek  
to lighten the night  
my beloved  
let the fire burn  
and consume the moth

## SMALLNESS

I live in a crowd of fakes  
smallness rises with age

my mind has ceased to think  
new metaphors hardly happen

hunger keeps me awake all night  
I mitigate minginess

inner lives are emptied  
and filled with fresh stresses

too many fault lines run through  
to make sense of the divide

my passion itches and prompts  
I nuzzle the virtual too

it's the same virus replicating  
the same hackers that hurt

the vigor and rigor of  
the new, left or pushed behind

whatever the remedy  
wounds take deaths to heal

## **THERE'S NO THIRD DAY**

Nestled between smog and dust  
my church faces a collapse  
beyond miracle: I can't  
stand up to resurrection

there's no third day for my soul  
no third eye for Shiv in me  
God is too old to revive  
the rhythm that was my once

I'm now defaced, mired in scams  
constantly raped and buried  
in chaos of abundance  
hope and unanswered prayers  
in journey through crevices  
love convulsions and faith shops

## **HARRASSMENT**

Weinstein looked for  
creative friction in sex

she always sought  
non-procreative sex

in life and business  
they condemn both

## **LIES**

No odysseys  
under water or space—  
retreat within

writing poetry in bed  
confronting words to evade  
the dead or dying

timidity of body  
its libidinal romps  
and circuitous lies

## THE RIDE TO RETURN

The ride in the car  
from airport to back home:  
my belly swings

the puke is too much too quick  
the day ends in head with what  
I'd take to get well

erase memories  
of love's pace in an  
ever burning house

dog-eared pages  
of the fragile world I wrote  
and caught myself

again and again  
gaze through the darkened space  
decay with aged trees

## **BANGALORE**

No walkways:  
food vendors line up  
with pushcarts and vans  
techies throng with backpack  
bike and friends  
deal with digital touch  
mobile eateries  
overwhelm footpaths:  
remnants of chilli fish  
chicken curry, biryani  
nan, uttapam, dosa  
and whatnot add to  
sensory chaos  
what if pedestrians  
snake through killing pace  
of traffic on footpaths  
Bangalore is colorful  
and affordable too



## THREAT

We chase myths in self-made Amazon  
fish turtles that change color in new waters

we create landscape of nightmares and wade through  
anacondas that threaten our confidence

lost in the jungles of our own making  
we beat about thorny grasses now

look for the twin flames for convenience  
cloud judgment and reality for control

challenge the Republic and divide  
the defense that could never be

## DEATH OF DESIRE

Evening walk:  
a peep into my own  
lanes and bylanes  
bodily harmony  
a sense of inner calm

soon disturbed  
by TV debates, news  
and serials  
over sliced apple, snacks  
and distorted wholeness

before retiring  
swallow pills to mitigate  
her rising hackles  
that walk me through to death  
of desire for love in bed

## ROOTLESS

Hidden from the eyes of others  
I was made in secret  
but can't remember my birth

from foetus in the womb  
to severing of the cord  
erased the memory

now rootless in the valley  
fading sensations of years  
pierce the darkling wings of  
world wide web that blob my being  
twisted and tangled, brushed

away like a fly hate mongers  
hash tag my creation  
pirouetting platitudes

## WARNING

Between midnight and three

I babble images

my grandson fears to hear

and kicks me in bed, warning

if I don't keep quiet

he won't sleep with me

## ACHCHE DIN

For divine bliss in the morning  
they call out cows to feed *rotis*  
then chase them away from the gate  
for fear of smelly holy shit  
the whole day their game of redemption  
through *achche din*\* in holes screaming  
minced onion in the eyes and  
ready to rob the cerement  
from bodies buried by strangers  
raising new slogans on sunset

*\*better days*

## GOURMET JOURNEY

To win elections  
they sponsor chaos chanting  
Modi, Modi  
kill tongues that utter dissent  
or oppose foolishness

in the name of Ram  
cow, love jehad, reform  
close all windows  
making dysfunctional  
the holy Constitution

with small deities  
watching periodic tango  
pop up dinners  
global collaboration  
in newer territories

without money pouring in  
dreams rise and sell  
feet forward, mind backward  
relishing lies of  
gourmet journey

## NEMESIS

The deities are dumb  
so they speak  
louder and louder

vie with each other  
for godhood

descend from mosque-top  
to Supreme Court

now await  
resurrection

## HAZY VISION

Rheumatic walking  
in crippling lumbar crisis  
they pity and pass

the waiting sun  
at the naked tree's corner  
my hazy vision

managing to survive  
with repair and maintenance  
ageing road

revives the dying nerves  
her momentary smile in sleep—  
I walk again



## EXISTENCE

Strolling in the alley  
he watches the road turn drain:  
it was dry till she came

now it's dust and smoke  
muddy and toxic  
day in and day out

he breathes in poison:  
listens to a dying sparrow  
near the gutter

midwinter the rising sun  
drives him to Seroflo  
and manage his restlessness

## A FATHER'S COMPLAINT

How can I contain  
her destructive energy  
she conceals what she is  
her toxic attitude

they all see  
as she unshapes destiny  
of her cornpone plots  
in elitist mode

she lets down her own folks  
with mendacious fabrications  
brings doom to her own children  
who were born innocent

brings shame to her husband  
who seeks to see them rise

brings dishonor to us all  
who hope to see her change  
despite the vanity wall  
she raised for years

she won't know what to do  
when her parents are dead  
or even we are no more

she can't even weep  
or scream on anything she touches

she may then squiggle in her fate  
alone in a lonely room  
while others may look and not care

## LET IT GO

Silent gaze of paper deities  
from the little temple  
in a corner in bedroom  
fills me with hope:

anything may happen anytime  
despite uncertainty  
unending jealousy  
or tragedy in life

I look for grace within  
contemplating the unsaid  
in the rhymes of rogues and heroes

I'm not afraid of  
the body in crumbled soil  
there's always another chance  
to re-form my own present

re-write another half-page  
in drunken oblivion  
God is going to let it go

## **BLOOD MOON**

Waking to a morning  
tainted with prayers  
on the toilet seat  
nude nature waves to a dull sun  
smitten by the night's long eclipse

## PERSONA NON GRATA

Feeling sick with sensory poisoning  
and the rising malaise is the black bile  
I ooze, do nothing but unweave

the mind lost in emotional memories  
and body in the swirl of sensations

sweating the cancerous stress, meander  
through the nerve pathways, the fleeting shadows  
the vague silhouettes, the colors in dark

rise to make me naked in bed  
and I yell expletives in half-sleep  
without knowing the pragmatics of response:

I hate the odor of my urine  
and the cycles of rectal bleeding  
no video game but frustrating

invading the mind and memories  
susceptible to viral infection  
medicines or no medicines I must  
escape the empty wreck piled within

lest the body's hormones system explode  
and the balance without is disturbed  
making me persona non grata

## **ME TOO**

I hate to end up  
an anonymous failure  
repeating the routine  
exploring the others  
reviewing what is not

there should be time for me too  
to turn the leaves between orgasms  
the fleeting moments of poems  
and the whole lot of deaths

## PROFILE

I don't know who shops my books  
or cares for sexy and wholesome  
for the time I showed up first

I haven't made any money  
transcending decades and not  
belonging to back-scratchers  
or goody-goody poetic  
academia and press

trying not to seem better, or sell  
I have stayed bold and alone  
a work in progress perhaps

even without audience here  
or maybe, I simply don't fit  
the politics of writing now

but long after I'm dead  
buried or burnt to ashes

I may rise again  
a tiny phoenix mapped in  
fresh DNA of silence  
from google's graveyard

## TANKA

Stars on the earth  
these glow worms I want to clasp  
into hands and  
offer to God as flowers  
of my first obeisance

the wine of love swells  
in my vessel dark shadows  
recede human dirt  
between sound and silence greets  
the joy and bliss of spirit

love's spirit descends  
and melds into her body  
lending it new life:  
I'm amazed how the unknown  
becomes one with her beauty

full blue moon  
divine channel from heavens  
illuminating  
arrival of Easter Sunday  
and April, the angel month



a serpent twists  
its head to face a dragon  
on her shoulder:  
their tails on breasts in water  
swirl to cleanse my kiss on skin

intruding  
the darkness of bedroom  
a tree's silhouette:  
she whispers its masked presence  
and says no to making love

tears dry up  
leaving no marks where her pain  
ends and mine begins  
on the face makeup damp  
with aching sweat and cold sighs

frozen  
in the icy wind  
my fingers  
she fears the chill  
on her cheeks

I thought I would make  
tea for her but she was sleeping  
I didn't wake up  
our back faced each other  
once again cold birthday

smallness of the small  
no sharing half-chewed betel--  
mischievous whisper  
in bed fuzzy sensation  
of ruddy lips that's no love

the tenuity  
of her story like hearing  
my own confession  
without the priest I wonder  
if I knew my true voice

wearied winter  
each night bed a living grave:  
drying breathing passage  
and lonely shadows  
delaying disaster

November morning—  
too many thorns to reach  
the only rose  
and the tormenting thought  
that I am forsaken

too small to explore  
the sea of the unknown:  
island existence  
breathing hell of darkness  
dreading hungry excursions

source of salvation  
depository of sins  
no cake cutting  
in church promise of reaping  
if we sow recovery seed

in the white of night  
sighs for supreme delight  
steal tender pleasure  
manipulating wetness  
in bed unmask simple sin

her name  
a soothing music  
in the mouth:  
I forget the pain in back  
I seek the sky in silence

unhappy  
with how I look and  
feel right now  
seek a best version  
and just look within

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no one knows  
when the sun will be clouded  
or when it will rain  
in Ramdhura  
women and weather one

last night's rain  
paves way for a clear sky  
this morning  
the breeze is cool and the sun  
adds a new hue to the spring

a tidal wave  
touches the shore to wipe  
my naked footprints  
and leaves behind some shells  
pebbles and memories

near the railway track  
she squats with hands on her knees  
and hides her parts  
in half-dark the naked truth  
transforms nature into nude

half-painting:  
palette and easel  
collect dust  
in the studio  
pained silence of mother

dreams puzzling  
smallness of waking  
I can't live  
the child's circumcision  
promise of happiness

turns off the mood  
for prayer in the park  
smelly underarm  
of a fellow walker  
running to reduce weight

choking air  
in a walled colony:  
two tired pigeons  
perch on overhead tank  
whisper pity on us

island of rubbish  
home to cows, mosquitoes  
and homeless mothers  
speak wordlessly passersby  
unzip to ease and move

the snail of traffic  
near red light bikes zig-zag  
on broken footpaths  
at Bannerghatta Road  
pedestrians seek safe refuge

health horoscope  
planetary conspiracy:  
rectal bleeding  
not healing for months recur  
backache with dying libido

unemptied  
the cup of remorse--  
begging bowl  
before the dumb deity  
years of noisy silence

visit Vinayak  
each day new prayers inside  
years old faces  
at the threshold hit their heads  
the dumb deity stays unmoved

earthy body  
and nightness of silence  
fear in mirror  
return to the river  
echoing hollowed sound

when change comes  
things change they say--  
sight beyond sight  
in the wealthy vacuum  
all is well with limping days

## LOVE: A Tanka Sequence

On the roof top  
she waits for her man with  
moon cake and lantern:  
a flash of silver showers  
on the mist-shrouded figure

raising  
her hard drink  
heavenward:  
to my man, lover of  
animals, soft in sex

she stoops low  
to the bottom shelf  
in black jeans  
her curves flattering and  
red lace groping her hips

a tress of hair  
she drops over the mole  
on her forehead  
thinking it's ugly and  
hides her own gazelle eyes

the beads of sweat  
on her breasts do not touch  
her years or face  
in candle light her shadow  
is more restrained than my thought

shaped like a bird  
a drop of water lands  
on her breast:  
my breath jumps to kiss it  
before her pelvic flick

it's not ageing  
but eternal delight:  
she under me  
smooth belly, nude necking  
slow stroking parting flesh

I love her undress  
the light with eyes that spring  
passion with kisses  
she leaves her name again  
for my breath to pass through

she undresses in  
dim light perfumes her body  
fills room with herself:  
we hit the hay together  
drowning in each other



the chilly twilight—  
tossing leaves and branches  
tell of the wind  
before sunrise she and I  
cross-legged, cling to each other

making love  
she tastes the salt  
upon my shoulder  
in the afternoon I pound  
like surf into her flesh

the wind lifts  
her curved nudity hidden  
in the water curtain:  
I touch the strings that whisper  
love in each falling drop

a happier image  
with salubrious top  
turns rapturous  
as she tamps her love  
with watery lipstick

love's spirit descends  
and melds into her body  
lending it new life:  
I'm amazed how the unknown  
becomes one with her beauty

## I'M NO RIVER: A Tanka Sequence

The sun couldn't help  
nor fish protest:  
river has no sex  
so it dried up  
trapped in its own banks

the otter watches  
a duck walking on  
the frozen river  
icicles drop bit by bit  
from a lone tree

at the river bank  
she folds her arms and legs  
resting her head  
upon her knees and sits  
as an island

I couldn't understand  
what's Hindu about having  
fish and onion  
after prayers by the river  
in the temple courtyard

I'm no river  
flowing toward the sea:  
I must find my way  
asking strangers in strange places  
sensing soul, using insight

## WAVES: A Haiku Sequence

Setting sun  
leaves behind sparkle  
on the waves

parabolic hue  
through the cloudy morning:  
wrinkling river

the sun rolls  
on the waving Ganges  
whitens love hope

blinding fog  
and cloud of darkness--  
river waves

waves of mist shine  
with sun the day resumes  
laughter shakes each bough

sea waves  
roll from far away  
white peaks

counting sand  
between the toes  
a dying wave

her name  
written on the sand:  
wave breaks

travelling back  
from the waves of bliss  
a foam-leap

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## HAIKU

year's first snowfall  
prediction of early spring—  
sakura buds

winter holidays  
my son chases butterflies  
flower to flower

workplace:  
wandering hands  
my knees intact

wandering  
in a grey land  
thick fog

a red globe  
rises at dawn:  
waving corn

a sleeping snake  
curled between the eggs—  
layers of leaves

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awake  
alone on the house top  
a sparrow

taking a nap  
on oranges in his shop—  
a fruit vendor

meditating  
in the morning sun—  
his long shadow

the village pond—  
waiting for her arrival  
with a baited hook

in their webs  
spiders racing to spin  
their meatless prey

height of the day:  
shadows chasing shadows  
ghosting dates

hitching up the skirt  
she fills her pockets with  
unripe mangoes

smell of fish  
in his apple juice bottle—  
costermonger

knee-deep in the pond  
awaits fresh catch to buy milk  
for the new-born

pumpkin for dinner  
she rues my preparation—  
devil's shit

waking up  
gloves ready for the catch –  
unclaimed light

dressing up  
for the blessing:  
money presence

crowded waiting hall  
fleshly warmth with smelly clothes:  
midnight train still late

on the footbridge  
an old beggar spreads  
her cardboard bed

camouflaged  
her soft fall on bed—  
dappled back

cursing love  
with freak abandon  
lain and lifted

in my path  
a monkey wrench—  
destiny

lonely hilltop  
looking for lavity—  
emerald full moon

crescent night  
she keeps the flame alive  
unstilled smile

her leaning head  
from night to deathless light—  
chemotherapy



a touch of fire  
in inner privacies:  
the will to live

darkness of the heart  
bouts of quiet clashes:  
midnight oracle

cleaning the remains  
of burnt out earthen lamps—  
dusky temple yard

walking alone  
lost in a different world—  
head cernuous

night ends  
in nakedness—  
lonely bed

touching her tattoos  
in the darkness of mirror  
moon from the window

ice cream  
melting on her lips—  
senses flood

a night wolf  
chomps the leftovers—  
teeth in moon

swimming with the wave  
stuck in the loop in water:  
wisps of memory

unable to map  
on the face where her pain ends  
and mine begins

she looks ahead  
after years of heart-bleed:  
harvest moon

chilly stillness  
mist of my breath  
blue Monday

stands the house  
unmoved on the rock—  
tornado

coming out  
a slip with zero—  
ATM

paid followers  
hitting with vile messages:  
panic attack

post truth or fake news  
hates odor of his urine—  
self-invented lies

life expires  
taking care of self—  
clever delusion

hovering my head  
luck-stealing spirits—  
golden moon

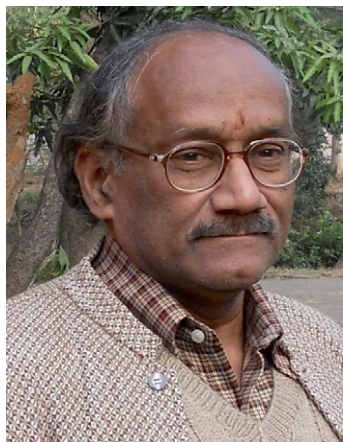
fishing peace  
in the inner sea—  
solitude

after the discourse  
beer and biryani in lunch—  
Happy Drinksgiving

prayer book  
covering the glass—  
his last drink

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## ABOUT THE POET

Ram Krishna Singh, born, brought up and educated in Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh, India), has been writing poetry in English for about four decades. He has authored over 160 academic articles, 170 book reviews, and 44 books. His recent collections of poems include *I Am No Jesus And Other Selected Poems, Tanka and Haiku* (English/Crimean Tatar,

Romania, 2014), *You Can't Scent Me and Other Selected Poems* (New Delhi, 2016), *God Too Awaits Light* (California, 2017) and *Growing Within* (English/Romanian, Romania, 2017).

Widely published and anthologized, and appreciated for his tanka and haiku, R.K. Singh's poems have been translated into several languages, including Japanese, Greek, Italian, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, Romanian, Crimean Tatar, Bulgarian, Russian, Slovene, Croatian, Farsi, Arabic, Serbian, Esperanto, Hindi, Punjabi, Kannada, Tamil, and Bangla.

His awards and honors include Ritsumeikan University Peace Museum Award, Kyoto, 1999, Certificate of Honor and Nyuusen Prize, Kumamoto, 2000 and 2008, Life time Achievement Award of the International Poets Academy, Chennai, 2009, Prize of Core Literature, South Korea, 2013, Naji Naaman's Literary Prize, Lebanon, 2015, and nomination for Pushcart Prize, 2013, 2014.

Known as an Indian English poet, haikuist and ELT/EST practitioner, Dr Singh retired in 2016 as Professor at Indian Institute of Technology-- Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad (India). More at: <https://profrksingh.wordpress.com> <https://rksinghpoet.blogspot.in> and [https://pennyspoetry.wikia.com/wiki/R.K. Singh](https://pennyspoetry.wikia.com/wiki/R.K._Singh)

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